'Substantial Irregularities' Cited

Experts Take Another Look at RFK Evidence

By Jack V. Fox
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LOS ANGELES — The pistol fired by Sirhan Sirhan and the fatal bullet fragment that lodged in Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's brain were brought back into a county courtroom yesterday as ground rules were set for re-investigation of ballistics evidence in the 1968 assassination.

The exhibits, packed in a brown cardboard box, and a wrinkled paper bundle of some of the clothing Kennedy wore the night he was shot were turned over to Superior Court Judge Robert A. Wenke for examination later this month by a panel of seven independent experts.

WENKE GAVE final approval to a court order of instructions to the panel whose key question was:

"Do the exhibits in any way support a conclusion that a second weapon was fired at the time of the assassination?"

The Los Angeles district attorney's office has reluctantly agreed to the partial reopening of the case although it has stated repeatedly that there is no doubt that Sirhan, now serving a life sentence, was guilty of the murder and that no second gunman was involved.

YESTERDAY, Deputy Dist. Atty. Dinko Bozanich said there had been "substantial irregularities" in the handling of the exhibits in the office of the county clerk since Sirhan was convicted at his 1969 trial.

The district attorney contends such irregularities may make inconclusive any results obtained from refiring the 22-caliber pistol and comparing the bullet markings with those removed from Kennedy's body and bystanders wounded in the shooting.

At an afternoon session, DeWayne Wolfer, chief criminolgist of the Los Angeles police department, was questioned about the procedures he used in gathering ballistics evidence on the assassination.

THE EXPERTS, who are to be flown to Los Angeles from all over the country, had originally been scheduled to conduct their tests independently but on the same day in seven separate rooms.

The court ruled yesterday that such an arrangement was impractical and ordered that the tests be held in one main "laboratory" with the forensic scientists using the same equipment.

It also ruled that the experts be ordered not to talk with one another about their tests or their findings until the results are published.

SIRHAN, now in San Quentin, must give his written consent before the retesting is undertaken, Wenke ruled. There was little doubt, however, that Sirhan would agree.

The motion to re-examine the evidence was brought by the Columbia Broadcasting System and Paul Schrade, a former United Auto Workers Union executive.